Reflection 1

Many times, people believe that the idea of leadership is as simple as telling people to do something and they’ll just do it. Yet, leadership is something that one can work on through implementing some type of strategy. The book discusses five main ways that leaders can encourage others to follow their lead and to pool their resources together in order to obtain some type of goal or objective. The five practices include: Model the way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart. My group was specifically assigned Model the Way, and in my opinion, this practice is most applicable to us in this day and age. The practice of Model the Way is in essence the idea that in order to be a leader, you must lead by example. According to our book, Model the Way “provides a prism through which all behavior is ultimately viewed.” Three main concepts for Model the Way are recognizing one’s self and one’s personal values, clarifying the values and direction of the group, and then following through with how one lives his or her own life.

Recognizing one’s self and one’s personal values is essential to this practice. People are inclined to practice what they preach only if what they preach coincides directly with their values. Additionally, people tend to be influenced by someone who is passionate and clear about their position. The book directly supports this: in order to be a leader that someone looks up to you have to “comprehend…the values, standards, ethics, and ideals that drive you”(Kouzes and Posner, 45).  For example, I led a team of my fraternity brothers to raise money for diabetes. Since my brother has diabetes and this is a something that I really believe in, I was very passionate about my vision for our philanthropy event and I believe that people got excited for the event when I talked about it. When I approached the president of my fraternity, Ross, and told him about the idea, he was incredibly excited as well because he too has diabetes. Although raising money for philanthropy doesn’t seem to be tough, motivating frat guys to do anything other than drink is pretty hard. However, we led a group of 10 guys to promote, market, and ultimately capitalize on the idea. We were able to motivate a whole group of guys to raise close to $15,000. When a leader is clear, passionate, and speaks about something that he/she believes in, leadership becomes easier.

The next concept for Model the Way is clarifying the values and direction of the group. It is very important to have a clear goal, but it is even more important to make sure that everyone knows what that goal is. In economics, different types of management are talked about frequently. In order to maximize efficiency, as the theory goes, employees (in this case team members) will work harder and become more motivated when they have a stretch goal that they are working to achieve. However, this goal is broken down into many smaller goals, called objectives. In my opinion, this is directly related to modeling the way. In order to be efficient, an overall objective needs to be present, while the group can work towards and finish many smaller objectives to stay on track.

Finally, the most important idea behind the “Model the Way” leadership practice is to actually set the example for others to follow and continue to set the example.  An effective leader both “lives the shared values” and “teaches others to model the values” (Kouzes & Posner, 75).  In order to achieve your short-term goals, one needs to apply the overall vision of the group and apply it. Without having a leader to strategize and setting the example, everything else becomes obsolete. This is clearly seen and supported by the book when Kouzes states, “No one will believe you’re serious until they see you doing what you’re asking of others.” My last example is when I wanted to start keeping my apartment clean. My roommates are very messy, and I love having a clean place to live. I kept asking them to clean up after themselves, but when they wouldn’t do it, I started cleaning up my mess but did so in front of them. This led to what I expect some type of cognitive dissonance, which led them to start cleaning up their own mess. Although this is just a silly example, the idea of Model the Way worked really well and fits this example perfectly.

Kouzes, James M., and Barry Z. Posner. The Leadership Challenge: How to Make Extraordinary Things Happen in Organizations. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2012. Print

My example for Model the Way is Jimmy Carter. Carter many times talked about social responsibility, and that giving back to the community after you have the means to do so if extremely important. Although I disagree with many of his political decisions, he has done a tremendous amount of work for underprivileged communities worldwide.

Reflection 2

My group, “Model the Way”, has worked extremely well together but we still have some obstacles to overcome.  My individual strengths include being a high achiever, competitive attitude, and a desire to succeed in challenging situations.  This will help our group effectively communicate and succeed in our group project while also having a fun time doing so.  As a result of the Strengths Quest assessment I see that our group is comprised of achievers, strategists, and competitive students that will help our group not only model the five practices of exemplary leadership, but also succeed in teaching others how to be a good leader.  Finally, in order to get group members more engaged in wanting to complete this project I will effectively communicate the deadline for the project, take into my own hands certain aspects of the project I can do myself, and help other group members complete their tasks.

We have been having some issues meeting and working on our project. Everyone has different schedules so in some ways we have been procrastinating actually started to film the movie. This however is not that concerning because we basically have the whole thing planned out. Therefore, it should not take more than a day to film everything. We all work well when we need to so I have no doubt we will be able to pull through this week and knock out this project.

I see myself as a highly motivated individual that can accomplish tasks that are important to achieve my personal long-term goals. I know that I want to go to a great graduate school after I work a couple years. Going to a great MBA program will require me to get good grades, and if putting in an extra couple of hours here and there will enable me to achieve my goals then I am willing to do so. This group is able to complete this project in good standing and do a great job, but it will require time and effort put in by each member.

I completed the Leadership Practices Inventory, and it says that my most frequent leadership practice is Challenge the Process, and tied for my second most frequent leadership challenge was Model the Way and Encourage the Heart, and finally tied for fourth was Inspire a Shared Vision and Enable Others to Act. Although Challenge the Process was first, I only scored two points higher in Challenge the Process than I did in the two that finished tied for fourth for me, which were Inspire a Shared Vision and Enable Others to Act. In my opinion, being someone that Challenge’s the Process benefits the group because I am always taking the initiative to look for ways to improve our project (Kouzes and Posner 156). I have also been encouraging everyone else in my group to take the initiative to make our project the best it can possibly be (Kouzes and Posner 166). Encouraging others to take the initiative sparks more ideas that are beneficial to the group and makes everyone in the group want to contribute more, which is always good for the group. The only way challenging the process may hinder the group is that I tend to take risks sometimes which could hurt the group’s progress in certain situations (Kouzes and Posner 156). Taking a risk that fails will end up hurting the group and may make it more difficult for the group to be successful in the long run.

Although I feel like I have been contributing a lot to the group, I still believe that I have room for improvement to make the group even better. First of all, I think I could help my group members more when they have a problem and are struggling to complete their part of the assignment.  I can bring more to the group by coming to class with more ideas about modeling the way that I learned about before class. Sometimes I come to class without having thought about our group since the last time we met, I believe that if I thought about modeling the way all of the time I could bring some better ideas to the group and help my group perform better as a whole. If I could get my whole group to do this as well it would really help our group in the long run. Finally, I think that if I spoke up more and lead the group more we would do a better job. I do not think anyone has stepped up as a leader in our group yet, which is alright, but I think if someone did step up and lead the group decisions would be made much faster and the group would have a better direction as a whole. Other than James—that kid kills it. I believe that if I could improve upon these different issues I could be a much better team member and the success of our group would improve significantly.

Reflection 3

After looking over all of the feedback we got from our classmates, it is clear that we have a lot of work to do. First, we need to organize the video to make it more chronological and clear. The video lacks any type of organization and needs to be amended. Next, we need to have a better introduction and more background information on our topic. Lastly, we need to edit the video more, taking out unneeded things such as loud music and poor transitions.

To start, it was clear that we did not pay attention enough to background information. We took for granted how much our audience actually knows, and we did not take into account that people outside of our class are going to be watching our video. We need to give more details about model the way, and explain where the idea came from and present it better. Nowhere in our video did we even really explain what modeling the way is, nor did we give any type of background information for the unknowledgeable viewer. This is my fault. I was the one who made the initial outline of the video and I forgot about putting in background information in our outline. For the final project, we are going to make sure that model the way is clearly defined and explained and that anyone watching our film will understand the theory.

Next, we need to organize the video better in order to hold our audience’s attention. We learned in class that without proper organization, even the best videos are for not. Our video attempted to be organized, but the truth is that we are far from it. We need to set up the model with background information, then talk about details of the model, provide great examples, and then ultimately explain the examples to make them clear for everyone to understand. This is the outline that we tried attempting, but I do not believe that it worked out that well. For example, our video about waiting for Brently was a good example, but it came out of no where and the example was not explicated correctly. In order to increase the strength of our examples, which also happens to be something our peers told us to do, we need to further explicate our examples and set them up better in order to succeed.

 Also, we need to edit the movie a little bit more to take out unnecessary disturbances, such as our loud music. For some reason, IMovie ruins the audio for music and blasts music way louder than the other audio. We will make sure to take this out. Also, we need to work on our transitions. Currently, the transitions in the movie cut out about 1-2 seconds of the next scene, which could be very important in regards to flow and audience attention.

Although we got a lot of feedback on things that we need to do better, we also received strong feedback on the creativity and entertainment aspect of our video: something that we really strived for. We thought that if we have a very entertaining and outside the box thinking movie we would be able to get more points for creativity. Plus, we feel that making an entertaining movie would be more fun for everyone involved, which in turn would yield us better results and a better grade. I do think that our video is entertaining; though it would suit us really well if we were also able to make the video more serious and detail oriented. For the final project, we will make sure that all the necessary components of a good video will be in place (such as background info, good examples, explication, and proper organization). Additionally, we will add more personal examples to further enhance our project. We have worked many hours on the movie filming, editing and outlining, and I expect that when we are ready to present our movie, it will be more than ready.

In conclusion, we have a long way to go with our video but through the feedback we received and our commitment to improvement I believe as a group we can provide a great explanation of Model the Way.  The theme present in all of our problems is that we did not consider the audience’s knowledge of the relational leadership model leading to a lack of understanding in our examples.  We have decided on a plan to fix our audio, improve audience understanding, and add dynamics to our content and organization to keep our video interesting and fun.

Reflection 4

As the project is coming to a close, I have noticed that all of the feedback from my classmates and project partners definitely yielded a better final result. My group, Model the Way, decided to redo many parts of our video, as well as reorganize the entire video, making sure that each part was in a chronological order that coincided with our presentation. Even though I thought I did a lot to try and lead our group, there were still a couple things that I could have done better in order to be the most effective leader and a good contributing member of our group. My strength quest assignment found that my best strength was being an achiever and a strategist. I think that these strengths played an important role in how I helped lead our group, and they play a very important role in the relational leadership model.

My initial thoughts of the LPI results were that I was very pleased with how I scored. I was pleased to find that my group found me to always “praise a job well done.” I know the importance of positive reinforcement. This is something that I have picked up through my years of being a tutor. I found that telling praising people when they do a good job motivated them a lot better than yelling at them. However, I also found that strategically critiquing them is very important as well. I also scored high in setting a personal example for others to follow. This is something that is very important with me, and almost ironic given the group I am in. Modeling the Way is all about leading by example, and I am happy that some of what I learned in this class was applicable to our group project. Although I could have for sure worked even harder and set an even better example, I believe by being vocal and leading by setting a personal example helped our group perform very well. I will use the results of the observer LPI to not only improve in the areas where I did not score as high as I would have liked to but also maintain the standard I have set to receive high scores in the other areas.

On my individual LPI, I gave myself a 9 on allowing people freedom to perform tasks, but I scored lower on the observer LPI. It is very interesting that I scored low on this, specifically because I really do not ever care how work gets done as long as it gets done on time and the quality is high. I must have been too harsh with assigning work (another thing I decided to be responsible for). This is very important in the grand scheme of things, especially since my intended major is management. In order to manage people effectively, which is a big part of leadership, everyone who works for you needs to feel empowered and in control. If I was too harsh with assigning work and did not empower the people responsible for the work, I failed as a leader. This is something that I take very seriously, and I will make sure that next time I am in this position that I will give more freedom and empower group members more.

Throughout the length of our group project, I decided to utilize my strength of being an achiever to help out our group and make sure that everything gets done.  The results of the strength quest assessment and the 5 leadership practices closely fit with the results of the observer LPI and will help me in the future to become a more effective group leader. I decided to take on the role of editing all of the videos, partly because no one else has a mac, and also because I thought that it was a very hard and lengthy assignment that no one else would want to do. Although I did not have any experience with editing video, I sat there, figured it out, and edited the entire movie. It really did not take that long, but I do believe that allowing my group members to focus their efforts on everything else without having to worry about the video made our group better equipped to succeed. This is something that I have always done, and always will do. I am not afraid to take on challenging situations, and when I figure out a complex problem, it brings me joy. I was able to use this to my advantage here.

Although I felt that I did a very good job being a leader, there are a few things that I would not have given myself a ten on. For example, I was given a ten on “actively listens to diverse points of view,” yet I feel that this is another thing that I need to personally work on. I am a finance major, and finance majors are known to always dominate conversations and be extremely stubborn. I am both of those things. Listening to other people’s opinions, especially people that I do not find to be intelligent can be a huge difficulty to me. It is something that I have been working on for many years, which is why I scored myself low on the individual LPI. Seeing that I got a 10 on this made me really happy, because it means that all of my hard work and concentration on other people’s ideas has paid off. Even though I scored a ten on this does not mean that I have perfected it yet, and I will make sure to continue to listen to many different people’s opinions before I make decisions.

To summarize, I believe that the outsider LPI was very beneficial to me in many ways. First, I was able to get an outside look at my work that was unbiased and first-hand. It is not every day that someone is there to observe you and grade you on specific characteristics. It makes you realize things that you never realized before, such as the fact that I need to empower group members more. This is something that I originally thought I was amazing at, but clearly something I need to work on. Additionally, being able to see how you scored showed us our weaknesses and strengths, and now we can use these results to become even more effective leaders. Being able to identify the strengths and weaknesses through this assignment along with applying the results of the strengths quest assessment and the relational leadership model to the results allows us to see just exactly where our group is struggling and actively work to improve it to ensure future success.